North Dakota Joint Information Center
News Release

For Immediate Release
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TIME IS RUNNING OUT

Ahead Of February 22 Deadline, Protestors Should Know Increased Risk of Public Health Deterioration

BISMARCK, N.D. – With Governor Doug Burgum and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordering protestors to leave the Oceti Sakowin camp by Wednesday, February 22, state officials are warning that protestors stalling and delaying cleanup efforts by the Corps and the State of North Dakota could lead to a deterioration of public health.

"Like any other exposure to untreated water, exposure to or ingestion of flood waters can result in infections or illness," said Kirby Krueger, Department of Health Director of Disease Control. "Flood waters contaminated with untreated sewage or animal waste can contain disease-causing organisms and exposure to these waters can result in illness."

Those involved in cleanup activities need to accelerate their efforts in order to remove the waste before it becomes an ecological disaster and water is contaminated for those living downstream, including the people on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

"If those living in camp refuse to evacuate, they are likely putting themselves and first responders in grave danger," said Gov. Doug Burgum.

"It would be dangerous and potentially life threatening for EMS or other rescuers to respond to a medical emergency in a flooded camp. It is hard to understand why anyone would endanger themselves and rescuers by ignoring warnings and staying in a dangerous flood prone area," said Tim Wiedrich, Department of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Section Chief. "It would be tragic if a protester, EMS provider, or any other rescuer lost their life because protesters ignored flood warnings about the camps."

The National Weather Service released its most recent flood forecast today and stated ice jams on the Cannonball River are "distinct possibilitiles in the near term as water rises during this early melt." The NWS also says snow melt in this area has caused soil moistures to be well above normal and putting the area "on the brink of producing significant runoff."

With near term weather outlooks showing an above normal chance for warmer than normal temperatures and precipitation, it is imperative that those living in the floodplain of the Cannonball River collect their belongings and leave immediately to ensure public safety.

Find this release and additional information related to the protest response at
http://ndresponse.gov/

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